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Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery

Joel Quirk

University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, joel.quirk@wits.ac.za

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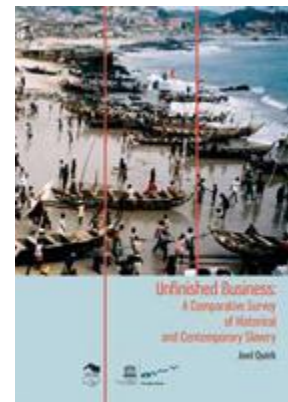
Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery

By Joel Quirk.

UNESCO and Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE), University of Hull, May, 2008, full report available as free [download](#), hard copies available in 2009.

Description from the Publisher:

Interest in contemporary slavery has increased dramatically over the last ten years, but there remains a widespread tendency to view slavery in the past and slavery in current society as independent fields of study. This publication moves beyond this artificial divide, providing the first ever comparative analysis of historical slave systems and modern forms of human bondage. From this standpoint, recent concerns over human trafficking, debt-bondage, child labor and other related problems are analyzed in view of the historical strengths and weaknesses of the legal abolition of slavery. By bringing together a range of studies on different aspects of slavery, both past and present, this publication provides an innovative platform for promoting dialogue about ways of addressing both contemporary slavery and the enduring legacies of historical slave systems.



Well aware that ignoring or attempting to hide key historic events can become an obstacle to mutual understanding, international reconciliation and stability, UNESCO decided to raise international awareness on the slavetrade and slavery as a means of contributing to the preservation of peace. Humanity's collective conscience must not forget this tragedy, symbolizing the denial of the most basic human rights. By virtue of its scale, its duration and the violence that characterized it, the slave trade is regarded as the greatest tragedy in human history. Moreover, it has caused profound transformations, which account in part for a large number of geopolitical and socio-economic changes that have shaped today's world. It also raises some of the most burning contemporary issues, e.g., racism, cultural pluralism, construction of new identities and citizenship.

The Slave Route Project was officially launched in 1994 in Ouidah, Benin. The concept of "route" was chosen to illustrate the flow of exchanges among peoples, cultures and civilizations that has influenced societies worldwide. In addition to exploring the historical aspects of slavery, the project aims to improve understanding of the present and to contribute to the current debate regarding multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. The main objectives of the *Slave Route Project* are: to contribute to a better understanding of the slave trade, its processes and implications, through multidisciplinary research; to objectively highlight the consequences of the slave trade on modern societies, in particular the global transformations and cultural interactions among peoples generated by the

tragedy; and to contribute to the establishment of a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence between peoples by encouraging intercultural dialogue. Since its inception, the project has been organized around five closely linked programmes in various fields of activity, including scientific research, the development of pedagogic tools, the collection and preservation of written archives and oral traditions, inventorying and preserving places and sites of memory related to slavery, the promotion of intangible artistic and spiritual expressions derived from slavery and slave trade; and the contributions of the African Diaspora. For further information on the objectives and activities of the UNESCO *Slave Route Project*, consult: www.unesco.org/culture/slaveroute.